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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

Note by the Secretariat

The attention of the General Assembly is drawn to Economic and Social Council decision 1997/293, entitled "Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance". The text of the decision is reproduced below.

Decision 1997/293. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

1. At its 39th plenary meeting, on 23 July 1997, the Economic and Social Council, taking note of Commission on Human Rights resolution 1997/74 of 18 April 1997, approved the Commission's requests:

(a) To the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session a detailed report on the financial and personnel resources required for the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination and invites the General Assembly to consider the possibility of providing the resources required for the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Third Decade;

(b) To the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to take duly into account, within the framework of the restructuring of the Centre for Human Rights, the repeated appeals of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council for the establishment of a mechanism within the Centre for Human Rights as a focal point for coordinating all the activities of the Third Decade before they are carried out by the United Nations;

(c) To the Secretary-General to provide the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, without further delay, with all the necessary assistance and resources to carry out his mandate and enable him to submit an interim report to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session and a comprehensive report to the Commission at its fifty-fourth session.

2. The Council endorsed the Commission's decision to recommend to the General Assembly the convening of a world conference on racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, whose main objectives will be:

(a) To review progress made in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, particularly since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to reappraise the obstacles to further progress in the field and ways to overcome them;

(b) To consider ways and means better to ensure the application of existing standards and the implementation of the existing instruments to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance;

(c) To increase the level of awareness about the scourge of racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance;

(d) To formulate concrete recommendations on ways to increase the effectiveness of the activities and mechanisms of the United Nations through programmes aimed at combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance;

(e) To review the political, historical, economic, social, cultural and any other factors leading to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance;

(f) To formulate concrete recommendations to further action-oriented national, regional and international measures to combat all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance;

(g) To draw up concrete recommendations for ensuring that the United Nations has the financial and other necessary resources for its action to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

3. The Council also endorsed the Commission's recommendations to the General Assembly:

(a) That the world conference on racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance be convened not later than the year 2001;

(b) That when deciding on the agenda of the world conference on racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance it take into consideration, inter alia, the need to address in a comprehensive manner all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related contemporary forms of intolerance;

(c) That the world conference on racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance be action-oriented and focus on practical measures to eradicate racism, including through measures of prevention, education and protection and the provision of effective remedies, taking into full consideration the existing human rights instruments;

(d) That it decide that the Commission on Human Rights should act as the preparatory committee for the world conference on racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and that its deliberations should be open-ended, allowing for the full participation of all States Members of the United Nations, members of specialized agencies and observers, in accordance with established practice;

(e) That it request Governments, the specialized agencies, other international organizations, concerned United Nations bodies, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations concerned with human rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and other human rights mechanisms to assist the preparatory committee and to undertake reviews and submit recommendations concerning the conference and the preparations therefor to the preparatory committee through the Secretary-General and to participate actively in the conference;

(f) That it call upon States and regional organizations to hold national or regional meetings or to take other initiatives in preparation for the world conference on racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance;

(g) That it request regional preparatory meetings to submit reports to the preparatory committee, through the Secretary-General, on the outcome of their deliberations, including practical and action-oriented recommendations to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other related forms of intolerance.

4. The Council approved the Commission's recommendation that the world conference on racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance be conducted effectively and efficiently and that its size, duration and other cost factors be determined with due regard for economy.